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IN RESPONSE



city

CHIP YOUNG

THESIS PREPARATION

SPR 1999

COMMITTEE. PROFESSOR BROWN. PROFESSOR FERNANDEZ. PROFESSOR HENDERSON

# Abstract

*Contemporary urban development has created physical, social, and political boundaries that build against 'city' as dynamic. The thesis is architecture as a catalyst to disrupting boundaries. Objectives include the development of program, activity, and event to stimulate interest in and movement through a site where currently there exists boundaries. Each objective independently coexists as an architectural response in an urban setting.*

*Market Street of Pittsburgh, PA, is located at the heart of the city's corporate area (The Golden Triangle). The street, once dynamic with the activities of 'city', now experiences corporate space claiming (mono-program), isolated open space (no program), and a severe edge condition (waterfront highway system). When urban spaces such as sidewalks, streets, and plazas (usually known to engage) are constricted, city dynamism dissolves.*

*The methodology is to juxtapose the new design (which engages) to the existing conditions (which constrict). The program is a school for the cinematic arts. The school will serve as a satellite for the numerous local colleges and universities surrounding the city's downtown. As film is a dynamic medium, the school will structurally respond to site boundaries. The activities of teaching, creating, displaying, and viewing cinematic arts will encourage associations among educational institutions and engage the city participant in 'city' as dynamic.*

Wallace Stevens (1879 – 1955)

### Anecdote of the Jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
And round it was, upon a hill.  
It made the slovenly wilderness  
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
The jar was gray and bare.  
It did not give of bird or bush,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.



C O N T E N T S

**P1**  
Platform

**P6**  
Statement of Thesis

**P9**  
Site

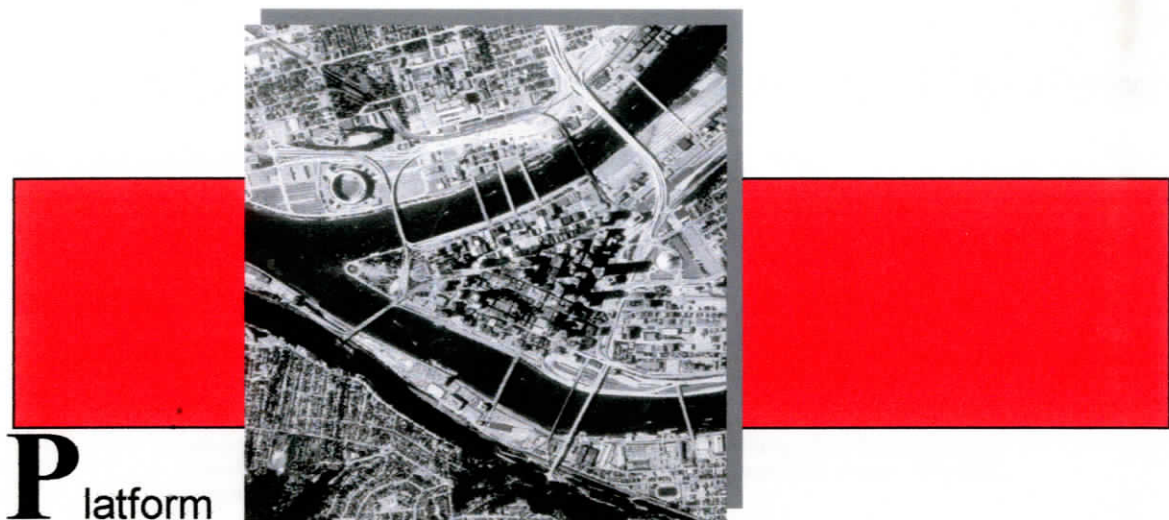
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Like many documents, architecture reveals the conditions experienced by the city during its development. Documents including books, maps, and films portray the forces experienced at a given moment in time. The city's architecture, including buildings, sidewalks, and streets, tells a story about the city and the people of the city. The story reveals the cultural, economic, and political influences that shaped and continue to shape. Unlike most documents however, the story of the city has no defined ending.

To gain a more informed understanding of 'city', we may consider the origins of the word. City, the word, comes from the Latin word 'civitas'. Civitas describes the coming together of people in order to make a community rather than human settlement in terms of a particular physical artifact. (Williams, 46) 'Civitas' then, includes the experience and the thought. 'City', from civitas, "...is an experiential and psychological construct as much as it is a physical manifestation..." (Genovese, 11) Although formal definitions of "city" exist, *what* city is continues to be examined, defined, and uncertain.

Consider the following definitions of 'city' provided by The American Heritage Dictionary and Webster's New World Dictionary;

city – 1. A town of significant size. In the United States, an incorporated municipality with definite boundaries and legal powers set forth in a charter granted by the state. 3. In Canada, a municipality of high rank, usually determined by population but varying by province. 4. In Great Britain, a large incorporated town, usually the seat of a bishop, with its title conferred by the Crown. 5. The inhabitants of the city as a group. 6. An ancient Greek city-state. 7. Formerly, a walled area in the center of a community. 7. Formerly, a walled area in the center of a community. [Middle English cite, Old French, from Latin civitas, citizenry, state, (later) city, from civis, citizen. See Kei-] (Morris)

city – [ME. & Ofr. cite, citet < L. civitas, citizenship, community of citizens, hence state, city. Civis, citizen < IE. Base kei-, to lie, camp, whence HOME] 1. A center of population larger or more important than a town or village. 2. In the U.S., an incorporated municipality whose boundaries and powers of self-government are defined by a charter from the State in which it is located. 3. In Canada, and of various large urban municipalities within a province. 4. In Great Britain, a borough or town with a royal charter, usually a town that has been or is an episcopal see. 5. All of the people of a city. 6. In ancient Greece, a city-state (Guralnik)

Today we can question if city is defined as we know it or definable at all. Such question rises in response to expectations of and perhaps experience within the city considering its dynamism and diversity. Like poetry (imaginative--promoting multiple ideas and images), the city can not be held to a singular meaning or definition. To do so destroys the very imagination that it inspires.

Wallace Stevens' "Anecdote of the Jar" reveals a perspective on an outcome inherent to uncertainty. Is the jar representation of materialism, imagination, and/or opposition that defines the surrounding wilderness? Of the many definitions of 'port', which one or combination fulfills the poem? As the multiplicity of possibilities and questions arise, so too does the poem's potential; to provide a platform for the imagination in asking, "what is possible and what can be?" Here, the individual complexities create an overall clarification. Because 'jar' and 'port' are not defined and are therefore uncertain terms, the poem is open to several possibilities for the reader's experience. The poem is



not bound by a singular definition and therefore enables freedom of creation by the reader; the participant.

The concept 'city' is uncertain with its multiple definitions, layers, sequences, and possibilities. One may be certain however, that the architect is faced with questions of how to design given an urban context. Such context includes "spatial situations identified with a density of copresent actions, interlocking characters, disorderly orders, and variable scale relations." (Kahn, 54) Many questions arise in the decision to design in an uncertain setting; the city.

Opportunities exist to engage willing participants in the city's multiplicity. However, "few cities have a department for pedestrians, or public life...Thus the people who are actually using the city are more or less invisible...and treated arbitrarily in the city planning process." (Gehl, 26) The impact of design within 'city' is a significant factor in the outcome of urban space and what it provides for/how it impacts the city participant. To recognize this impact is to also identify the structures of making decisions and what this means for the profile of 'city' and the city participant. Considering the systems at work *upon* the city and the increasing interest in the city participant, Michael Kwartler, director of the Environmental Simulation, states,

"Anglo-American empiricism and the legal system derived from it have tended to dominate urban planning and design decision making. The legal system's adversarial approach to adjudication is essentially a zero-sum game of winners and losers and...it is not a good model for the planning and design of cities. While the adversarial approach does resolve disputes, it rarely creates a positive and constructive consensus for change, and it has not clearly defined the limits of the individual's rights and the public's interest in the use of property." (Phillips, 37)



The architect is challenged to consider the *experience* of the participant in and around the built form of the city's development. This challenge is an opportunity to create dynamic spaces with events that engage city participants. The participant's experience is considered by architect Bernard Tschumi to be significant to 'city' as he writes,

"Static notions of form and function long favored by architecture discourse need to be replaced by the attention to the actions that occur inside and around the buildings—to the movement of bodies, to activities, to aspirations; in short the social and political dimensions of architecture." (Tschumi, *Event Cities*, 013)

The participant's experience as a "right to urban space" was a focus of, art historian and critic, Rosalyn Deutsche's presentation at the Syracuse University "Spaces, Places Symposium" presented on April 17, 1999. (Deutsche) Identifying the city as a 'societal' construct rather than a physical one, Deutsche explains that the city is manifest "as a mental and social form" where the opportunities of the individual reveal the city's idea of an individual's right to the city. Deutsche explains that the social life is revealed through the right to politics—to not be excluded. Do urban spaces reflect/support this 'right' of its users? In response, Deutsche identifies that this 'right' is achieved/encouraged when urban spaces do not discriminate through spatial domination or suggest privatization of territory by private owners; each working against those who use (participate in) the city. Deutsche reiterates the significance of urban space as a construct of who we are and what we believe to be significant in our city experience. As the city holds several influential categories (financial, educational, political, and social), how we construct the city is then an indicator of our interest to include or to exclude.

The common activity of walking through the city is a tremendous realization of democracy. Movement is a realization of freedom as it composes the threads of the urban fabric. Deutsche cautions however that when (1) movement is constricted; (2) circumstantial activities deteriorate (from surveillance of open spaces); and (3) spatial domination exists by private owners; the right to the city dissolves. The architect is challenged to speculate on how to build *in response*.

The dynamism of 'city' and the capability of architectural form to engage its participants provide opportunity for the architect and participant to liberate from placing limits on the profile and possibilities of 'city.' "Nevertheless, architects, planners, and developers continue to imagine – and image – urban sites as boundable, free of perplexing situations." (Kahn, 54) The design of urban architectural form significantly contributes to what 'city' reveals, asks, and encourages. "Architecture and its spaces do not change society, but through architecture and the understanding of its effect, we can accelerate processes of change underway." (Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 15) Here opportunity exists for the architect and architecture to activate a creative and responsive *civitas*.

The concept *civitas* has an important role in the consideration of designing in the city as it, "is an important sensibility of our lives...our communal existence...Key among them is a capacity to sustain wide-ranging social and political discourse without the stifling rigidities...of either statism or private

enterprise.” (Rowe, 9) In response to this significance, where does the architect begin and what architectural form will respond to urban boundaries?

## STATEMENT OF THESIS

The thesis is architecture (host of program, activity, and event) as a catalyst to disrupting urban boundaries. The goal is to create an architectural response to contemporary urban development that has created boundaries and decreased the dynamism of ‘city.’ Physical, political, and social boundaries decrease the dynamism of ‘city’ and build against civitas. Contemporary urban development has produced boundaries of territory (mono-program), isolation (non-program), and edge. Analysis of contemporary urban conditions reveals the impact of territoriality of corporate space claiming, static open space, and cuts inflicted by major transportation arteries. Such conditions result in decreased access and dynamism of city.

With such boundaries, streets are less used and more questionable. The pedestrian may question their own belonging in a space/on a street that suggests privacy and lacks inspiration for use as it is cut from activities of the city. Although urban boundaries will exist, when elements such as street, sidewalk, and plaza (usually known to engage) constrict urban space, the city’s dynamism is reduced. Identifying, questioning, and challenging existing urban boundaries encourage opportunity for the architectural form and the participant to engage in



and experience the dynamism of 'city'. This supports the development of the concept 'city' as dynamic and engaging; not exclusive.

Thesis objectives include clarifying program, activity, and event. The objectives are guided by the following parameters;

A **PROGRAM** is that which makes up/composes a plan for proceeding with a matter.

An **ACTIVITY** is the act of doing and the causing of action and motion.

An **EVENT** is a happening or an occurrence.

The parameters focus the thesis objectives as the following;

The **PROGRAM** is a school for the cinematic arts; an educational based satellite facility available to local colleges and universities hosting instructional programs and exhibition opportunities.

The **ACTIVITY** is the teaching, display, and viewing of the cinematic arts.

The **EVENT** is the association of local collegiate populations and engagement of city participants with/through urban spaces.

These objectives independently coexist in disrupting boundaries. Though not a *recipe* ( $x+y=z$ ), these objectives stimulate each other and each may represent the  $x$ ,  $y$ , or  $z$ . The intention is for each to encourage architecture as catalyst to dissolving boundaries. Structural form that hosts program, activity, and event will engage the city participant in the city dynamic. As architecture has produced boundaries, so too can architecture dissolve them.

The system of pursuit (method) through which this thesis is investigated includes a dialectic of conditions in juxtaposition; (A) the existing which constricts and (B) the proposed which engages. A challenge is to design urban architectural form (that which juxtaposes) in response to the already existing



boundaries. The intention is to establish an event upon the urban 'stage' (site) that frames elements (already existing on the site) and thereafter engages the participant's imagination of 'city' and consciousness of existing boundaries through their own associations.

Clarification is noted here that it is not the intention to juxtapose in an effort to simply oppose. Rather, the intention is for the juxtaposition to establish criticism of contemporary urban development (disrupt boundaries that render urban spaces private, abandoned and isolated). The representation of film as dynamic and the reflection of the client's interest in and practice of breaking limits is included in the intention. The juxtaposing creates the opportunity for plurality of interpretation that supports the concept 'city' as well as the client's practice revealed/interpreted architecturally.

Such events and their pieces/frames "derive significance from juxtaposition. They establish memory--of the preceding frame, of the course of events. To experience and to follow an architectural sequence is to reflect upon events in order to place them into successive wholes..." (Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 165) An intentional outcome for the design is to encounter a condition(s) not ordinarily encountered therefore evoking personal reflection, awareness, and questioning of boundaries. As participants engage in the program, activities, and events, they also take part in the disruption of boundaries.

## SITE

The thesis necessitates an urban setting. Market Street of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania is not extremely different from many other urban streets. However, the magnitude to which boundaries are placed upon this street make it appropriate for this thesis. To understand the site and its significance specific to the thesis we may analyze the elements that exist to reveal constituent ideas.

Once an active street of 'downtown' Pittsburgh, Market Street represented the dynamism of 'city'. Such dynamic offered the opportunity for participants to



engage in the city. The Street is the first *main* street of Pittsburgh. A linear sequence of events, Market Street included a vital 'public' square (Market Square), cafes, shops and engagement with a festive riverfront; each a destination in their own right.

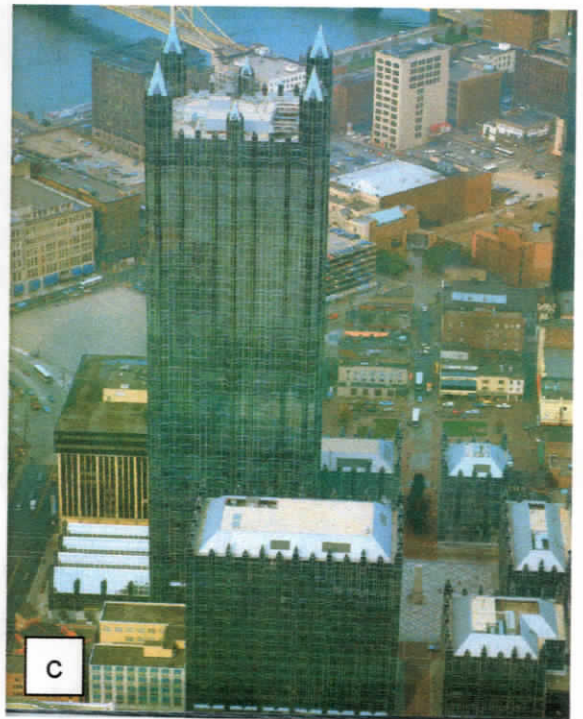
Presently, Market Street is located in the heart of Pittsburgh's corporate environment known as The Golden Triangle (a). This area has



undergone significant development throughout



this century. Identified as the 'Renaissance City', Pittsburgh transformed from an industrial manufacturer of steel (b) to an international corporate center (a). This transformation produced several changes for the city and Market Street has certainly felt its influence. Such influence includes; the corporate absorption of downtown space (c [PPG Plaza]), the development of surrounding riverfront transportation arteries (d), and neglect of a landmark gathering site (c [Market Square]). Market Street does not currently benefit from the dynamism of the city.



Market Street's square, Market Square, has undergone numerous transformations over time. From the time Pittsburgh was a frontier

village, Market Square was "the principle marketplace of the city." (Smith, 73)



The site of a succession of events including several market houses (e), Market Square was also the first site of the Allegheny County Court House. By the 1930's commercial opportunities spread throughout downtown and with the post-World War II use of the vehicle, this 250ft/square space grew to be less of a commercial or general destination. Presently, the Square is moderately used by lunching employees and vehicular (through) traffic on its two bisecting streets; Forbes Ave. (East to West) and Market Street (North to South) (f). Market



Square's past includes downtown activity (g) but currently is the site of longtime vacated space (h).

Critical response to Market Square includes; "...a four on a scale from one to ten overall and about the same on each of its elements—walls, floors, furniture, and people and activities. As a destination, it attracts mainly a small population of loiterers. For most others, it is a route to buses, shopping, or Heinz Hall Plaza...that rates a 10." (Houstoun, 63) Market Square lies 150 feet to the north of Market Street's latest addition, Pittsburgh Plate Glass Corporation (PPG Place), 1984.



PPG Place, designed by Phillip Johnson and Burgee Associates, is an office complex of six buildings including a 40 story tower. The six buildings surround and create a 200 ft/square plaza (*“PPG Plaza”*). With a central pink granite obelisk, PPG Plaza absorbs a section of Market Street now inaccessible to vehicular traffic (i). PPG Place, when proposed, was to be a gift to the public; America’s newest Rockefeller Center “as Johnson/Burgee proposed a square as the focal point of the city for shoppers and late-evening crowds.” (Toker, 61) But PPG “lacks the appeal of the public...people are avoiding it...there is too little to warrant the trip...PPG lacks the amenities...not linked to streets and avenues to attract crowds, and is not well integrated with public transportation. It’s just an office building.” (Houstoun, 63). Much the antithesis of Market Square, the territory of PPG is evidenced as “empty, iconic, surrounded by a uniform arcade, punctuated by crystalline chandeliers, and, centered on a pink-granite obelisk, the plaza is itself a self generating sacred precinct.” (Boyle, 79) PPG is



recognized as a successful design that serves its client well in developing a

privatized space. Favorable responses include; its existence within the city's 18<sup>th</sup> Century grid, its winter garden open (intermittently) to the pedestrian, and its strong presence in the city's skyline.

Perpendicular to the southern most point of Market Street is a highway system that severs this and all downtown streets from the waterfront (j). These streets were once accessible by ferry and boats as the riverfront bustled with industrial and commercial lines. Today, the waterfront remains active however only one side of the river enjoys engagement with the river; the shore opposite of the downtown.

Downtown Pittsburgh is 'choked' from its riverfront and its streets are isolated from the events of the river and the riverfront. These events include the Three Rivers boat races and daily paddleboat cruises of the Gateway Clipper Fleet.

Areas across the river, to the south, and to the northwest of the downtown have flourished in development and activity.

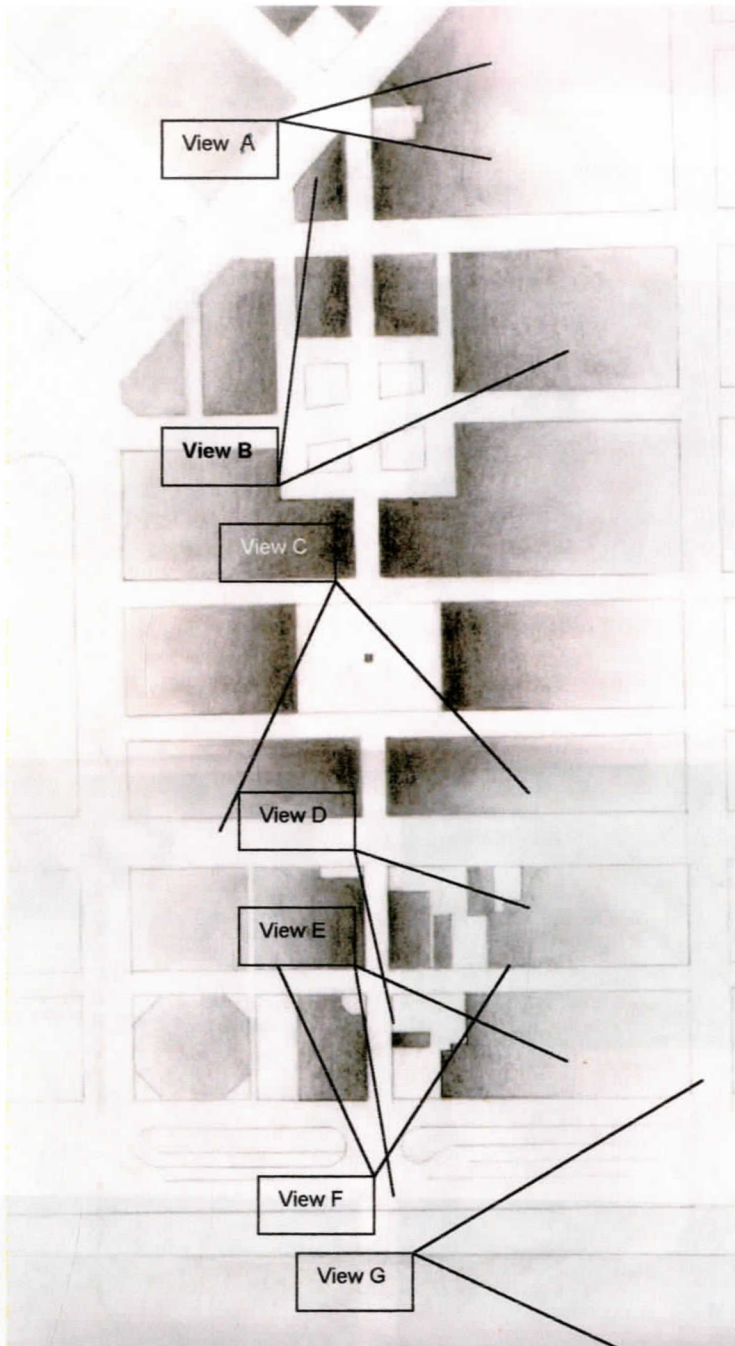




Such development includes Station Square, The Pittsburgh Sciences and Technology Museum, and Three Rivers Stadium. Station Square is the dock of the Gateway Clipper Fleet and is visible from Market Street. Three Rivers Stadium host major sporting events throughout the year. The Gateway Clipper Fleet transports thousands of sports and recreation participants and tourists close to but directly past the downtown. The 'Clippers' once engaged participants with the downtown (k). Today's highway system deters such engagement and delivers traffic away from the downtown (l).



The city and specifically Market Street reveal the impact of the existing boundaries that isolate, privatize, and cut the urban spaces from activity. The current stimulants lead participants away from the downtown to educational, commercial, and entertainment events around the city. Needless to say, the downtown grows increasingly disengaged from existing opportunities.



View A



View B



View C



View D



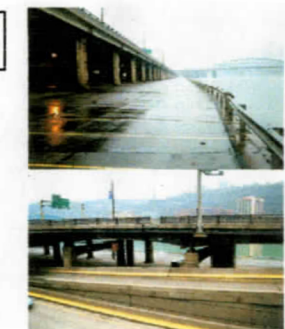
View E



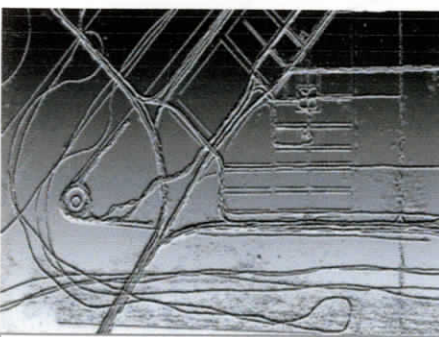
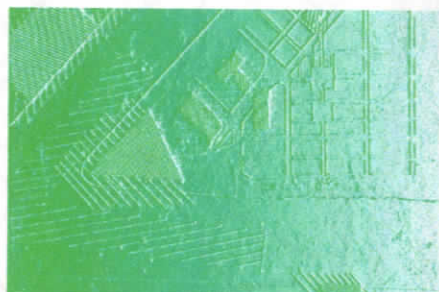
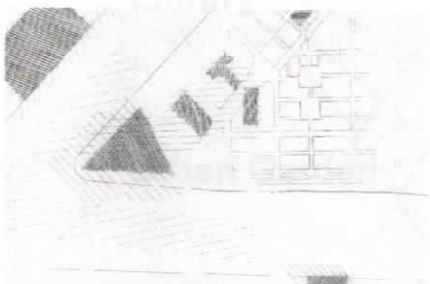
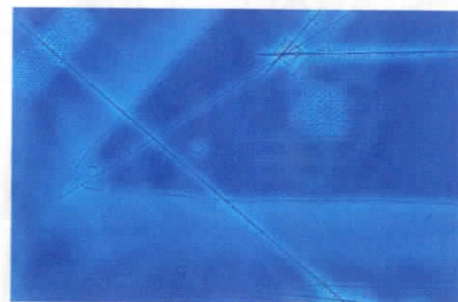
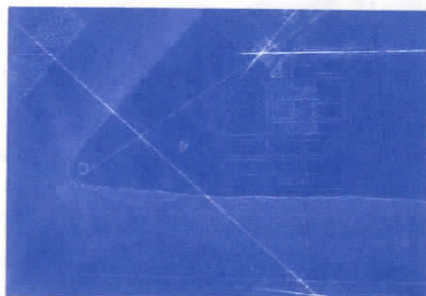
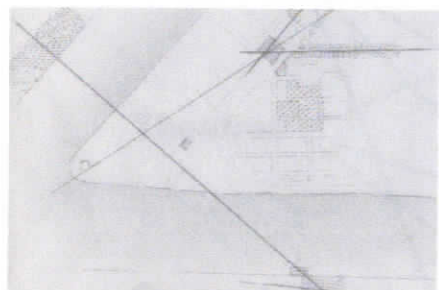
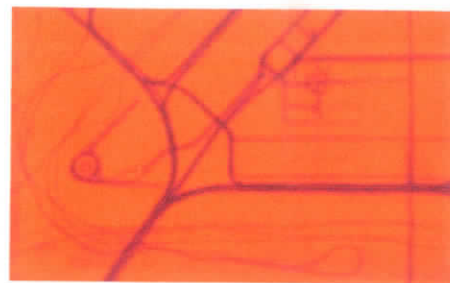
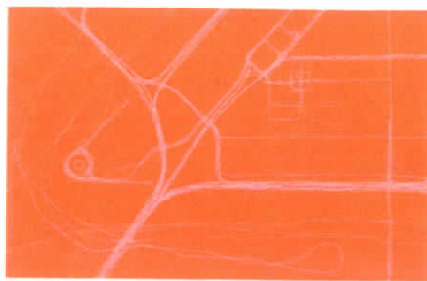
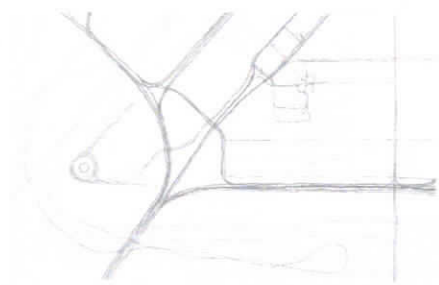
View F



View G







ACTIVITY



PROGRAM



EVENT

## PROGRAM

# SCHOOL FOR THE CINEMATIC ARTS

Gallery

Theatres

Open-air cinema

Library

Urban Garden

Support Services

Studio

Café/Coffee Bar/Book Store

TO GATHER  
TO CHOOSE  
TO VIEW  
TO DISPLAY  
TO INSTRUCT  
TO ACCESS  
TO CONTEMPLATE

The program for this thesis is a school for cinematic arts. Although film and architecture are parallel in many ways, for the purpose of this thesis, the medium of film is chosen as it creates an experience for/with its participants. Film is not a static medium nor does it support boundaries. To the contrary, film "is unique in many ways... it offers the excitement of finding untried ways of expressing things; its capacity to make a direct route into the minds and feelings of the audience... a deeply human connection." (Platt, 264) The 'experience' with film develops this medium from *just* an image on a screen to one of communication. Such communication is capable of identifying and moving through limits imposed by physical, social, and political boundaries.

As "film has always been a reflection of societal attitudes," (Rich, 2) it is a valid resource through which to navigate a response to contemporary urban boundaries. Although film, like architecture, has been credited for having an impact on the experience of its participants, whether film has made any societal changes is difficult to measure given various additional historical influences at different moments. Social film criticism examines and questions such societal impacts and suggests "it may be ultimately impossible to conclusively demonstrate how the movies have affected thought and action since any such impact might well have been long-term, diffuse, and even unconscious." (Combs, 5) Film will support a bolder assertion for this thesis.

Film is a creation of the imagination at the same time it evokes the imagination. Film has a powerful ability through its persuasive images to conduct the experience of psychologically transporting the viewer into a different world,



condition, and perspective than that currently known by the viewer. Here, the viewer is moved across limits and through known boundaries. Through the transactional relationship between moviemaker and audience, film has proven to be a dynamic and compelling form of communication.



Film is a medium that engages. Through film, it is not uncommon to experience the questioning of personal/interpersonal boundaries. Film plays a didactic role in; (1) raising levels of social and political awareness among the masses; (2) encouraging debate of deeply imbedded narratives; (3) recognizing the journey of *the other*; and (3) enabling us to imagine, 'what if?'. Through film's engagement of the imagination, it enables us to suspend disbelief for the moment. 'Film' is credited as being a medium that can arouse emotion, prompt action, and evoke thought. It is not uncommon for an audience member to leave the movie theatre with a different perspective (concerning the self and/or others). The experience film provides in engaging its participants in the questioning of

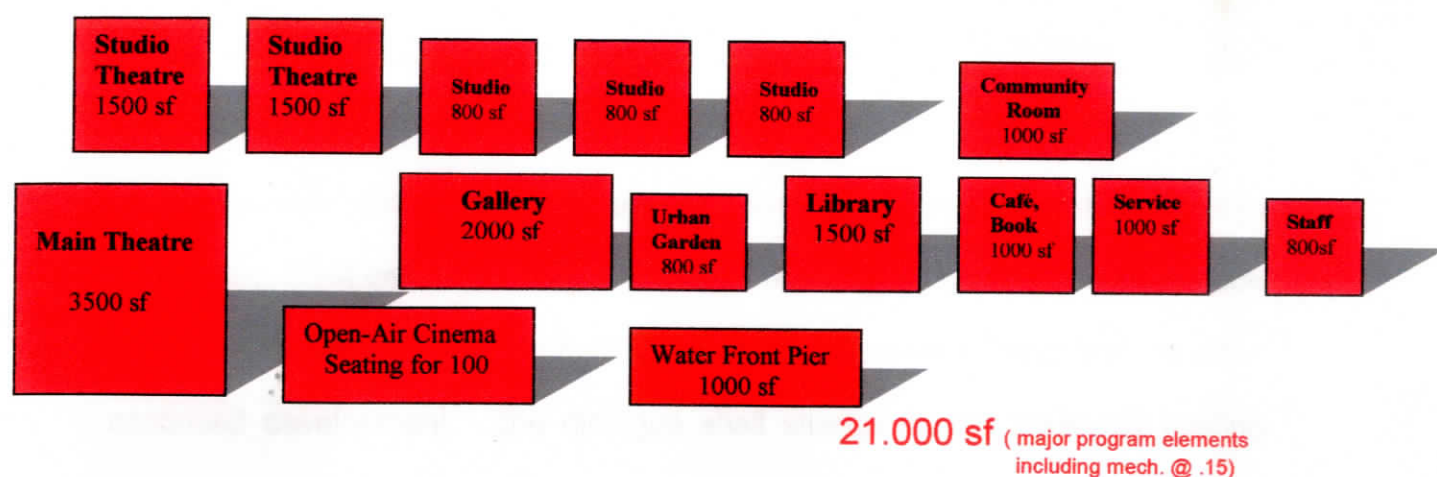
and moving across limits is a feature that supports this thesis. Film is not just an image on a screen; nor is architecture just a building on a street.

Students of film are conscious of the role film may play in contemporary society. Like the city, film is dynamic in its form and content; movement, exploring the new, and continuously questioning what is possible. As a medium that challenges limits and is most effective with its audience when it facilitates the experience of psychologically moving through limits, a film school will benefit from juxtaposing itself with a site of political, social and physical boundaries. This juxtaposition is supportive of this thesis.

The school seeks to serve both the educational body and the city. The school will provide amenities to be accessed and enjoyed by city participants. For example, the open-air performance space may serve as place to preview student and professional film work with a community audience. As well, the same space may during the day provide cultural events such as lunchtime musical performances. Film (cinema), commerce, and cultural activity (exhibit and performance) engage; each stimulate activity and an interest in the area (Market Street).

The program will serve this thesis by:

- 1) engaging participants (students and city)
- 2) developing a place for association of local colleges and universities
- 3) providing opportunity for activities to attract participants to move through boundaries and activate static space



The program includes activities along a coordinating and engaging line. The 'enfilade' establishes a program of *small-scale* nodes that, unlike the existing boundaries, encourage movement from one to another. Possible 'nodes' include; a water front pier; main school building; sidewalk/catwalk gallery; news stand kiosks; and an open-air cinema. The participant is then engaged in the event of disrupting boundaries by moving through them to participate in the individual nodes that compose the school for cinematic arts.

From this, interventions through architectural form, materials and language of representation will emerge. As well, my design organization and skills for the visual and verbal communication of the idea will be assessed.



## DESIGN ISSUES

Although the thesis will create architectural form that juxtaposes site boundaries, it will create a dialogue with the urban landscape. Links will be made to the city context through materials and forms. This serves to represent the city's continued development. The dialogue shall strengthen the thesis by hosting events and context of the site.

To fulfill a thesis that proposes an exploded program hosting activities as the participant moves along a street, through boundaries, will require design of how movement will be facilitated and what features of the design will connect (physically, psychologically, and/or visually) each element. Of importance to the thesis is that the pieces are related to present a single design that presents the disruption of boundaries. The elements considered to achieve this may juxtapose to yet create dialogue with the site including choice of;

- materials

- color

- street and sidewalk surface patterns

- form

To create such dialogue, metallic material and scaffolding structure are examined. Pittsburgh's context includes an image as 'the steel city'. Once a city of numerous steel mills including blast furnaces exhibiting spectacular forms at various scales, Pittsburgh, has only few remaining remnants as reminders of its

industrial history as a steel manufacturer. The remnants of the mills are valued by many as reminders of; (1) the city's existence; and (2) the city's former identity as the *gateway* to the West.

The form of scaffolding is examined for its literal and theoretical meanings. Scaffolding is associated with construction, that which is used to support, access and engage;

scaffold - [ME. Scafald < OFr. escafalt< es- (L.ex-, out) + VL catafalicum]

1. a temporary wooden or metal framework for supporting workmen and materials during the erecting, repairing, or painting of a building, etc.
2. a raised platform on which criminals are execute, as by hanging
3. a temporary wooden stage or platform, as that on which medieval plays are presented
4. Any raised framework—to support with, put upon, a scaffold

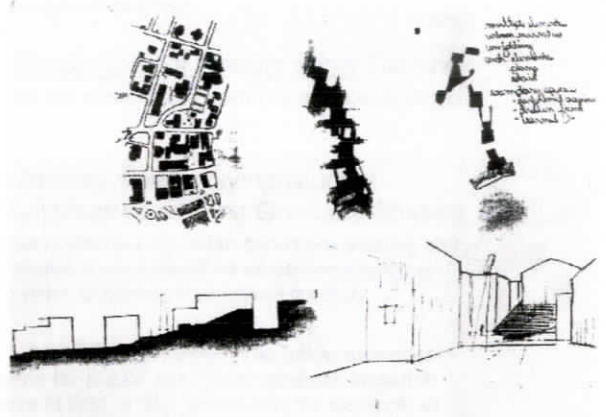
Scaffolding is representational. Such representations include the following ideas; the assembling and connecting of smaller elements to create the larger; gaining access to that which was formerly bound by conditions; and structural entity subject to change with its needed use.

## PRECEDENTS

Precedents examined to explore this thesis are;

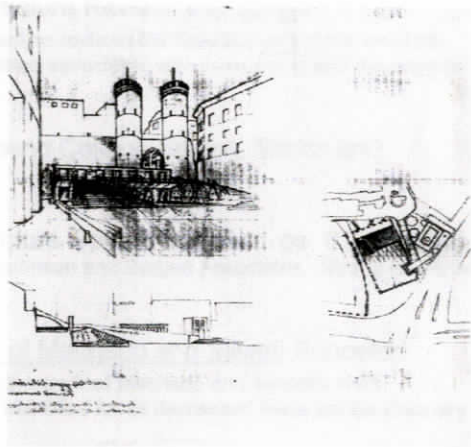
### Machado and Silvetti, Steps of Providence, RI

A focal point of this design is the linking of spaces that engages participants in movement through the site(s) creating moments for pause.



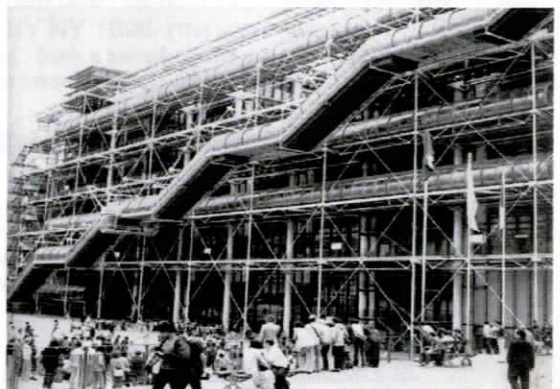
### Piazza Dante, Genoa

The design includes creating moments of pause as participants pass through. As well, the design include theatre like steps stimulating gathering spaces for events to take place.



### Piano and Rodgers, Pompidou Center, Paris

The design is credited for activating the surface/façade or the building with the engagement and movement of participants bringing constant life to the building and providing an experience for the city participant.



#### .+ REFERENCE:

Vasari The Corridoio, Florence

Tschumi Kyoto Center, Japan  
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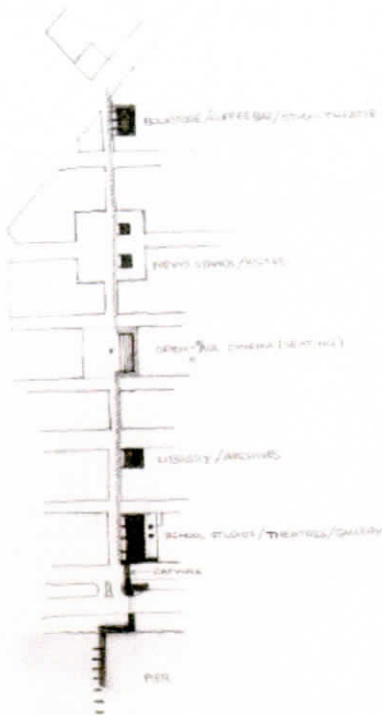
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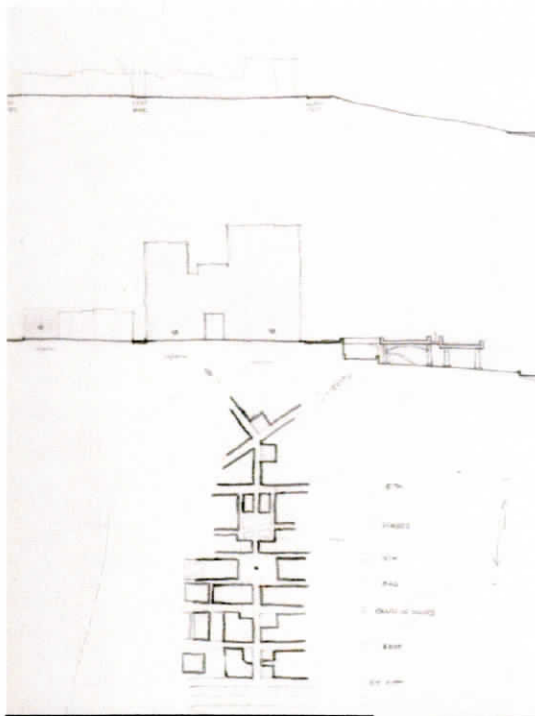
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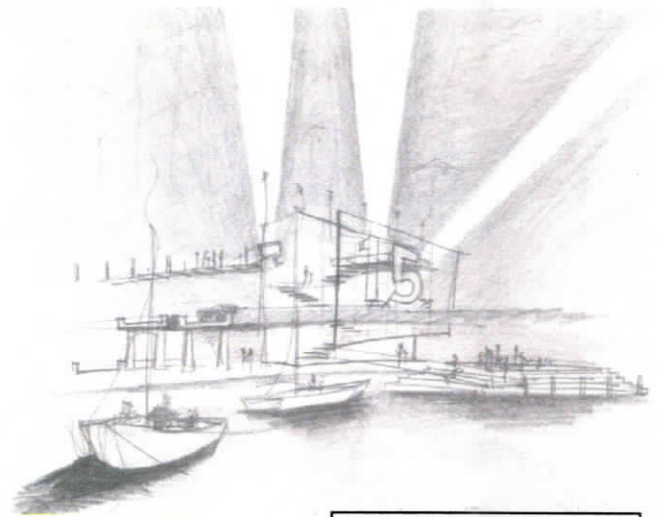
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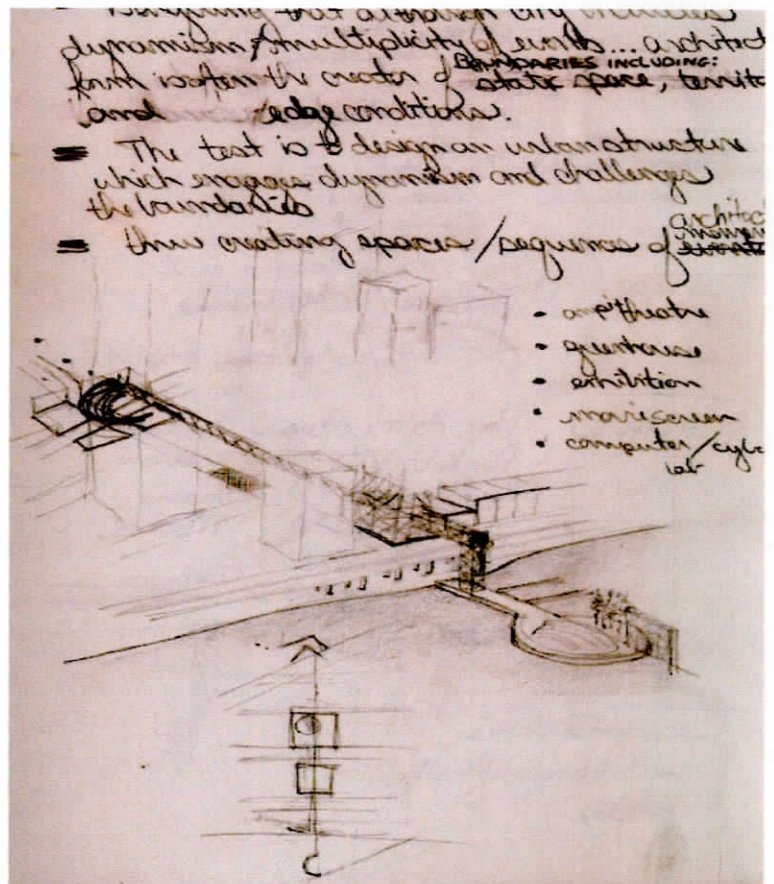
site with parti



plan and section of Market Street



sketch for water front Pier



initial design response to site